

City 17: Untouchable

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Summary: On arrival to City 17 Skylar thinks her live will be horrible and full of fear. But as the people around her disappear she realises something is protecting her. Then she makes new acquaintances, discovers the truth and begins to see that there might be a light in the darkness. Rated T for violence.

1. Relocation

My eyes open slowly, so slowly. My head pounds. I wake up inside a train. The seat I'm lying on has red fabric that is all but worn away; I see the rivets drawn into the walls, the rubbish on the floor, the general wear and tear of the place. I slowly move round and sit up. I see two others on the train. One is male with a deep tan, dark hair and wearing the worn clothing that everyone seems to have. The other was also male; he was pale with brown hair and a scared looking face. They both look at me as I sit up.

"Erâ€| Hi," The first man said, "I was wondering if you were okay, you didn't wake up at all."

"Hello," I replied, "I am fine, thank you. It's just been a long few days."

"I know what you mean, so, which city are you moving from?"

"City 11. What about you?"

"City 8."

"I'm going to 17 now," He said. The conversation is difficult because there is not much we are allowed to say.

"Yeah me too," I said, I smiled at him to make him feel more comfortable, it felt strange to smile I have never done it in such a long time. The other man was just sitting nervously on the edge of his chair.

"My name is Cole," The first man said, "What is yours?" He is trying to make the other man comfortable by keeping up the conversation. It's like he is pretending to not know what we are heading towards, the only problem is City 17 has a reputation and saying it is bad is just an understatement.

"My name is Skylar," I replied with another smile which felt too false, there is no way I could be happy, "How about you?" I look to the second man. His eyes lifted off the filthy floor to me.

"My nameâ€œ!" His voice was hard and clear, "Is Luke." His eyes returned to the floor and the look of fear resurfaced. Silence fell on our train car. I could feel the fear and the dread hanging heavily on my shoulders, my clothes, my hair, everything. The train jolted and rocked and bumped over the tracks every now and then sending vibrations through my spine. I liked City 11, my family and friends were there, it had its own kind of dangerous safety. Now I have nothing. Nothing was drawing closer and closer by the second. Then the train slowed into the station and my hope sunk like a stone. The door opened automatically. I saw Luke begin to tremble. Cole bravely picks up his case and steps onto the platform first. Luke follows with his case, still trembling and I follow him with my case.

The floor is dirty with food packaging and lost belongings everywhere. Then I hear Dr Breen's booming voice welcoming us to City 17. His face is projected onto a screen; he has greying hair, wrinkles and a brown suit. The three of us continue into the station ignoring Dr Breen's ludicrous claims. Then we see multiple fences with loads of Civil Protection officers standing around.

"This way," Speaks one of them, they sound the same; monotone, robotic, alien.

"NO!" Luke bursts, "I can't do this, I want to go back!"

The CPs look at him.

"This way!" The first one repeats more abruptly.

"NO! NO! NO! I am not moving!" Luke yelled. The CP pulls his stunstick up to his side and approaches Luke whose expression is now wild. He brings it down off Luke's face knocking his balance slightly. Luke pushes the CP officer.

"I'll kill you if you lay another finger on me!" Luke exclaims. Two more officers run towards him.

"Surrender citizen!" Another CP officer demands.

"NEVER!" Luke screams. The three officers pull Luke to the ground, grabbing him by his clothes. The left sleeve tears and falls to the ground revealing a squat tattoo. The CPs stand around him, just looking. I move closer. His tattoo looks like some kind of Greek lettering. I gasp.

Lambda.

"Resistance!" The third officer bellowed. More CPs approach there stunsticks raised high; they all beat Luke repeatedly until the

ground around him turns scarlet and his body turns motionless. No wonder he was so edgy, he was resistance.

"Move on!" The first CP officer demands Cole and I raising his blood drenched stunstick at us, "Nothing to see here." We walk along through the rest of the fencing and the seemingly endless searches. Cole and I are then allowed to leave the train station and find our flat because luckily we have been put together, at least I have one acquaintance.

2. Heartless Oppressor

The flat is in no condition for living. There are hardly any furnishings or walls or floor or anything. There is a chair, two beds with only mattresses- even though there are at least five people in this flat, and the standard kitchen and bathroom fittings. Mould takes the place of any kind of wallpaper and the floor is warped and cries when you step too heavily on it.

"Ermâ€¦ hello?" One of the five questioned our arrival, "Who are you?" His sharp eyes narrowed at us.

"I'm Skylar," I said and then gestured to Cole, "This is Cole." Cole smiled gently trying to get any form of acquaintance from our new flat mates.

"We have been assigned here," Cole stated, wrinkles creasing around his mouth as he spoke.

"Welcome to the city of hell!" Another one said. She appeared to be wild, her flame coloured hair a mess, her pale green eyes wide and darting between us.

"I'm David, I work in the factory industry," greeted the first one. I didn't like him.

The others told us their names: Nadia, Brick, Maisie and the one who welcomed us to the city of hell was called Inferno. The all ranged from ages 20-50 and all had the same worn looks that would appear on someone at least two times their age.

"So where are you from?" asked Nadia, her skin was a soft chocolate which matched her eye colour.

"I'm from City 11 and Cole is from City 8," I replied.

"Aren't those cities rife with resistance?" David asked, suspicious of us. It's clear where his loyalties lie.

"I'm not sure," Cole replied carefully.

"Anyway, David, Brick, don't you need to go to work?" asked Maisie. She smiled at them in a friendly manner, a manner that didn't reach her cold stare.

"Yes, we do," Brick replied and they both stomped out. The others appeared to breathe a sigh of relief after their exit.

"Can we trust you?" Maisie questioned. She had stunning blonde hair

and dark emerald eyes.

"Yes, I suppose," Cole said with a welcoming smile.

"Me, Nadia and Infernoâ€|" Maisie began, "Are resistance. Do not tell anyone."

"Seeing as your both from cities with the largest amount of resistance, can you tell me why you were relocated?" Nadia asked.

"I caused too much trouble, my family was always surprised that I didn't end up dead or in Nova Prospekt. The Combine moved me because people began to copy some of my actions and they didn't want an uprising on their hands," I explained.

"And you?" Inferno asked Cole.

"Unlike Skylar I have spent time in Nova Prospekt, I assaulted a grass, a man I knew- Oscar- he alerted the Combine that my sister was resistance, then they killed her. I was released two years on and they decided I should move to a different city for their grass' safety." Cole answered.

"We need larger numbers, will you help us?" Maisie asked.

"Wellâ€| we'll have to think about it," Cole replied just before our door swung violently open, hitting the wall and denting it. The silhouettes of CPs were thrown on to the floor; their footsteps heavy on their entrance.

"Time for physical activities, I suggest you," One of them pointed to me and Cole, "Go out for a walk and youâ€|" he pointed to the others, "Go to room 160 in the activity hall." They turned on their heels and left. Cole and I left shortly afterwards.

"Why did you say we'd have to think about it?" I whispered to Cole.

Cole looked at me, "Because it's dangerous. We could get killed."

"Cole, their oppressors and they need to be overthrown," I said, "Think of your sister." For a while Cole went silent, I thought I had done wrong by saying what I did.

"I'll do it," Cole said, he looked at me again, "Are you?"

>"Absolutely!" I replied.<p>

On return to the flat we noticed blood down the stairs. We run up three steps in a haste to discover what has happened. There was a large pool of blood on the floor of our threshold. We stepped over it only to find Maisie and Inferno sitting tearfully in the 'living' room floor.

"What happened?" Cole said.

Maisie sniffed, "They suspected Nadia of resistance, when we got home the CPs followed and they took her and killed her."

"We think David was suspicious of herâ€|" Inferno was interrupted by the return of David and Brick.

"Suspicious of whom?" He asked.

"Nadia, the Combine killed her."

"Only to good I say, one less mouth to feed."

"Shut up! Shut up! Shut up!" Inferno flared up, she launched herself at David hitting him across the face. He pushed her off, onto the floor.

"I would stop this if I were you," He advised coldly.

"You're just like them," Inferno yelled, "A heartless oppressor."

3. Resistance

The weeks that followed were pretty boring; we had to the same activities day in, day out. But when we did help with a plan for a larger group of resistance David and Brick became more and more suspicious of us. Until one day when they caught us in the act.

"The others are going to lay mines along the intercity train lines to stop reinforcements being able to enter," Inferno instructed just as Brick and David pushed through the door.

"I knew it, all along I have been living with filthy resistance scum!" David exclaimed, "None of you move will be back in a second." The both of them left.

"Well, you can't call them smart," Maisie said, she reached into the back of the chair and pulled out a gun, "This is the only one we have, let's go, now!" We raced from the flat not wanting to be caught by the combine. We ran down several streets to hear the warning alarm being sounded.

"Warning! Resistance members on the loose!" came a robotic voice over the alarm. We climbed a dark, iron fence and climbed into the garden of a large yellow building.

"Psstâ€|" Someone called, "Follow me." It was a girl who was older than me; she had dark curly hair and was wearing a Black Mesa sweatshirt under her beige jacket.

"No!" Cole exclaimed putting his arm in front of me as I went towards her, "How do you know you can trust her?"

"Look at her sweatshirt, doesn't that mean anything to you?" I replied and carried on past Cole, but as he turned a bullet flew into his head surrounding the area in his blood. I ran towards the girl and turned back, the Combine sniper had picked every one of them off. I let out a shriek.

"I was there why didn't they kill me too?" I said through my tears.

"Come on," The girl said, "It's not safe here!" She guided me through many streets; I have no idea where I ended up all I remembered was a ride on a rusty green elevator to a basement, and then entering what looked like a laboratory. I wished I remembered the way out because the first person I saw was a CP officer. I shrieked and tried to run only for the officer to tighten a grip around my waist.

4. Doctor Kleiner's Lab

I elbowed the CP officer in the stomach, his grip loosened. I kicked him in the shin and pushed him away from me. The girl pulled me away.

"Shh," She whispered in my ear, "Its okay." The CP took his mask off to reveal a familiar face. I gasped. He tilted his head.

"Do I recognise you?" He questioned himself out loud. The girl slowly released me.

"She was at Black Mesa," an auburn haired man in a HEV suit spoke up, "She was very young."

"Who are you?" I asked looking at the familiar faces surrounding me.

"I'm Barney Calhoun, this is Alyx Vance, Doctor Kleiner andâ€| The CP began.

"Gordon Freeman," I interrupt looking at the auburn man, "They told me about you in City 11."

"Well, everyone, follow me," Dr Kleiner said as he turned around and walked through a doorway. We followed, he lead us into a room with a teleporter similar to the one involved in the Black Mesa Incident, I remember looking over blueprints I salvaged. Dr Kleiner established a video link between us and Eli Vance who quickly demanded for his daughter to be teleported first. Alyx stood on the platform of the strange but familiar looking contraption.

"Gordon, position yourself by those switches," Dr Kleiner ordered. Gordon walked over to the wall next to me; he gave me a crooked smile.

"Flip the switch!" Came another order. Gordon lifted the safety guard and flipped the switch; Alyx disappeared immediately in a flash of light.

"Right now, ermâ€| what is your name?" Dr Kleiner looked at me.

"Oh, I'm Skylark," I replied. Something flashed in Dr Kleiner's eyes.

"Skylark?" He questioned.

I rolled my eyes and grinned cheekily at Gordon, "Yeah?"

Dr Kleiner paused, "Step on the platform of the teleporter." I moved towards it.

"Lamarr? Lamarr no!" A headcrab leaped from an air duct, ripping wires away from the wall, an alarm sounded. I screamed when the thing landed next to me. I went to kick it.

"Skylark, stop, don't kick my darling," Dr Kleiner yelled above the siren. The headcrab jumped on the teleporter, causing more damage, before finding it's place resting on his owners head.

"My darling?" I said to Gordon, "Is he insane?" Gordon chuckled. Dr Kleiner shut the alarm down.

"What the hell is going on down there?" Eli yelled through the video link.

"Lamarr caused some damage," Doctor Kleiner replied.

"How much damage?"

"Enough to put it out of action."

"Why do you have a headcrab as a pet?" I asked, "Those things are creepy, not to mention the fact that they might, perhaps, turn you into, I don't know, A FREAKING ZOMBIE!" This got laughs from both Barney and Gordon.

"They are now going to have go through the Canals, there is no other way," Eli sighed, then he spoke urgently, "The combine have picked up on the energy change in your local area and are sending a couple of units your way." The connection broke up. At that moment Barney's radio went off. "C17:i4, we have an unexpected energy change in your local patrol areaâ€|" the monotonic voice went on for a while, we all just stared at Barney, "If you find perpetrators, please deal with."

Barney looked up at us, "I should go before they miss me." He left through a small door near Doctor Kleiner.

"Gordon, Skylark, you should go to," he said, "Oh, I almost forgot, Barney had a present for you." He handed us a crowbar each. I smile gratefully and followed Gordon out of the door.

5. Route Kanal

We find ourselves around the back of Dr Kleiner's lab with combine scanners circling overhead.

"This way," Gordon said and ran towards a boarded up gate. He raises his crowbar and yanks the boards away. A flash of light goes off behind us; I raise my crowbar and turn taking a swift blow at the scanner that is giving away our position, it falls to pieces. Gordon runs through the now open gate, I follow quickly. We drop down into a train station, there are CPs everywhere. They fire at us immediately; using the motionless trains as cover we only fight those in our path until will make it to the other side. A chain link fence stands in our way, I scale it quickly much to Gordon's surprise. I have had plenty of practice scaling fences trying to evade CPs. Still dodging and diving bullets we make are way to a rotted door. Gordon kicks it open.

The scene in front of me isn't surprising. There are two CPs and two civilians. One is lying on the floor with blood around him, a CP holding a gun to his forehead. The other, a woman, is being held with her face pressed against the wall. They look at us the second the hinges burst.

"Help," The woman screams. The CP punches her to get her to shut up.

Gordon runs and kicks the one above the man in the head. I elbow the one holding the woman in the face. The mask doesn't hide his surprise as he loses balance and let's go of the woman. He hits me in the jaw with the butt of his pistol. I groan then bring the crowbar round and smack him in the side of the face. He falls to the floor. A bullet pierces his head. I look to Gordon who has a gun in his hands and bloodied crowbar strapped to his back.

"Finally, a real weapon," He grins. I smile in return. I take the CP's weapon from his grasp. We search them and find some spare ammunition.

"Thank you," comes a voice from behind us. We both turn. The woman we freed smiles.

"I'm sorry," Gordon said apologetically, "I couldn't do anything forâ€|"

"I know," She interrupts, "I'm grateful to you for freeing me, but you should leave, they'll be looking for you now."

"You should come with us," I suggest.

She shakes her head, "I'd rather stay with him, plus I would just slow you down."

"Come on Skylark," Gordon said as he walks towards the door at the end of the passage.

"Bye," I say to the woman as I pass her.

She smiles, "Bye and good luck." Gordon shuts the door after I pass through it. I look into his eyes.

"She didn't come with us because she knows where we going and who we are, she knows we are considered dangerous, and didn't want to risk it," Gordon said, "You need to forget the people we leave behind."

"I know," I said, "I always have." Gordon looks at me curiously but doesn't ask.

"We should go." We walk up some stairs on to a balcony.

"After you," Gordon motions downwards. I climb over the railing and drop onto the train track below. Gordon follows shortly.

"You okay?" He asked.

"Yep." I replied.

"This way," He starts running down the track. I soon see where we are off to; a gate stands open revealing a polluted canal. A loud horn sounds from behind us.

"Shit!" Gordon curses. We both sprint towards the gate, combine train hot on our heels. Gunshots sound from behind us; people are shooting at us from the train. We both jump right, out of the path of the train and through the gateway. I stumble as I land and fall off of the damaged walkway and into the dirty canal getting a mouth full of water. Gordon jumps and lands gracefully beside me. He smirks as I spit the water out.

"Damn you, Gordon," I say while gagging at the horrible taste left in my mouth, he chuckles. I pick myself up and stand next to him in the ankle deep murky water.

"I'm honestly surprised you have lived this long," He grins, I roll my eyes. We make our way through the canal, jumping over the accumulating rubbish and the odd burnt out car, Gordon occasionally helping me out and killing the odd Barnacle.

"Help!" a man yells. We spot a pipe, with a tired looking man trying to escape through the iron grating; behind him gunshots grow louder, "Help!" The CP who is now behind him puts a bullet straight through his head; he falls to the floor with a groan. We quickly pass the darkened pipe to avoid getting shot. Gordon steps in front of me as we near the corner. He presses his finger to his lips. He slowly moves forward and looks around the corner. He kneels down and looks back at me.

"Combine mounted gun up ahead," Gordon says, "Keep down and they won't see us." Gordon and I crawl forward slowly to not drawn attention to ourselves; we quickly reach the pipe and walk down it only to find the lone CP waiting for us, I take him down with one quick bullet to the head.

"Nice shot," Gordon whispers. We look around the resistance station, picking up necessities like food, health kits and ammunition. A radio crackling makes us jump.

"Station 12, come in! Station 12, do you read?" An urgent voice cries. A worried sounding man from station 8 replies. Then comes the gunfire.

"The Combine is trying to crush anyone who might have helped us," Gordon told me, "Its gonna make things just that little bit more difficult." We silently climb a ladder leading to the mounted gun standing above us. We shoot the two CPs without them even knowing what had hit them. Twenty more came around the corner; Gordon picked them off easily with the gun. We hopped down onto a smaller wall and ran along it into a partially collapsed tunnel. This tunnel reminded me of something, someplace underground.

"Watch it," Gordon warned. He grabbed my arm and pulled me back just before I got sucked up by a barnacle.

"Sorry, I was in my own world," I said.

He smiled, "That's alright, just watch yourself." He put his finger to his lips again. I followed his line of view. Three combine stood

in conversation around one of their vehicles. Gordon looked at me with his crooked grin. I nodded. He raised his pistol and took out two of the three of them, I took out the last. We holstered our pistols and ran for the jet black vehicle, Gordon jumped in the driver's seat, I jumped in next to him. He kicked the thing into drive and off we went.

"Had much experience at driving these?" I quizzed.

He grinned, "Nope." I gulped. He laughed.

6. Could've Fooled Me

City 17 was flashing away in the background, Gordon was flooring the armoured personnel carrier having the time of his life, and I was gripping hold of the seat hoping my scarce lunch wouldn't make a return journey. The wheels screamed as we flew around a corner. Bullets started pinging off of the front.

"Looks like we've got company," Gordon comments.

I frown, "They're not combine, theyâ€¢ what? The resistance are shooting at us!"

"We're in a combine vehicle drivingâ€¢ I dunnoâ€¢ like a hundred miles per hour, course they're gonna shoot at us," Gordon says.

"Good point." Behind us another vehicle pulls into view.

"Oh fantastic!" Gordon exclaims. I hop on to the emplacement gun and fire at the other APC behind us, I hit the left front tire which bursts, I then hit the CP on the gun. The resistance stop firing at us. I hit the left back tire. The vehicle swerves frantically, the driver desperately trying to do anything to prevent a messy crash. He fails. The APC hits a bump in the road, overturns, the oil tank erupts into smoke then explodes.

"Hey, you might want to sit down for this," Gordon yells, I get off of the gun and slide into my seat, a large ramp comes into view, "Hold on to your stomach!"

"No, No, NOOOO!" I scream as the APC flies over the ramp and lands heavily on the bank of a very shallow stream. Steam billows out from the engine. Gordon kicks up the speed again and heads for a makeshift gate. He knocks the speed down as we approach.

"We should probably ditch this," Gordon says.

I look at him, "You think?" He hits the break. It fails. Gordon curses about a hundred times as he pounds on the break and anything else that could possibly stop us. He tries to pull the speed down but that doesn't work. We are travelling at about 30mph as the APC collides front on with a very solid wall. The forces hurtles me forward and pulls me back at the same speed. I groan loudly.

"You okay?" Gordon asks, "We should get the hell out of this thing." He grabs hold of me and pulls me out of the car. The smoking engine is now flaming. We sprint away from it taking cover behind a large

pile of rubble. The engine explodes making the ground beneath us shake and a ringing to start in my ears.

"No experience at driving combine vehicles," I gasp, "Could've fooled me." I smile sarcastically. I then realised I shouldn't have said anything, I turn around and thrown up against the wall.

When I finish and regain my non-sick feeling I hear gunshots.

"Ready to go?" He asks. In answer I climb the ladder and pull a valve which opens the gate. He walks towards the open gate; I jump down next to him.

"Could have just said yes," He grumbles. I give him a push. The gateway leads into another tunnel, it's filled with random rubbish like crates and punctured tires.

"Oh my goodness," comes a small voice which quickly turns into a yell, "Its Gordon Freeman!" Three resistance fighters run towards us.

The first, a tall man with a bald head smiles, "Was that you making all that noise out there?"

I roll my eyes, "Clearly." He shoots me a dirty look.

The second, the woman who saw us says, "You're here for the airboat, right?"

"Yeah, probably," Gordon says, she laughs. She leads us up the tunnel a bit. The water starts getting higher as the ground beneath us grows lower. We climb onto a platform and turn a corner. There sitting in front of us is the worn looking airboat.

The third resistance fighter, an older, scientific looking guy taps my shoulder, "I have something you might need." He disappears into a side room, then turns around and motions for me to join him. I follow him. The room as one blue sofa, a radio and a chalkboard with a map pinned to it. In the corner stands a mechanical looking thing with a keypad. The guy hits a few buttons. A door lifts up revealing a HEV suit. I walk over to it.

"Doctor Kleiner gave it to me as spare parts, I fixed it up," He says, I just stare at him, "Go on, it's yours." I take it down; he helps me put it on.

"You're lucky the person it was made for was your size," The guy says with a grin.

I smile, "Thank you."

"Don't thank me, dear, thank Doctor Kleiner when you see him next. And good luck with your journeys." I leave the room. Gordon stares at me.

"Cool," he says, "Thank you, Elliott," The old guy is in the doorway behind me, he smiles at Gordon.

"You really should get out of here," The woman says, "It won't be long before the combine figure out where you are." Gordon jumps into

the seat on the airboat.

"Are you sure we are both going to fit?" I ask.

"It'll be tight but better than nothing hey," The first guy says. I squeeze in next to Gordon. He starts up the engine. The resistance fighters give us their luck and wave as we race of into the wilderness.

End
file.